

NEGRO CONTRIBUTORS TO AMERICAN LITERATURE  
A HANDBOOK ON COLORED WRITERS

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<u>PREFACE</u> .....	1v
<u>A CRITICAL SURVEY</u> .....	1
THE BACKGROUND OF NEGRO WRITING .....	2
THE NOVEL .....	8
THE SHORT STORY .....	11
POETRY .....	13
THE DRAMA .....	17
<u>BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHIES</u> .....	19
Lewis Alexander .....	20
Gwendolyn Bennett .....	20
Arna Bontemps .....	20
W. S. Braithwaite .....	22
Benjamin Griffith Brawley .....	23
Sterling A. Brown .....	24
Charles W. Chestnutt .....	25
Countee Cullen .....	25
Raymond Dandridge .....	27
Frank Marshall Davis .....	27
W. E. B. DuBois .....	29
Paul Laurence Dunbar .....	30
Jessie R. Fauset .....	32
Rudolph Fisher .....	33
E. Franklin Frazier .....	33

Frank Horne .....	34
Langston Hughes .....	34
Zora Neale Hurston .....	36
Fenton Johnson .....	37
Georgia Douglas Johnson .....	38
Melene Johnson .....	39
James Weldon Johnson .....	39
Nella Larsen .....	41
Alain LeRoy Locke .....	42
Claude McKay .....	43
William Pickens .....	45
G. S. Schuyler .....	46
Anne Spencer .....	46
Wallace Thurman .....	47
M. B. Tolson .....	47
Jean Toomer .....	48
Waters E. Turpin .....	49
Eric Walrond .....	50
Walter White .....	50
Richard Wright .....	51
Carter G. Woodson .....	52

### PREFACE

The material collected for this small volume is of necessity limited. Data, especially up-to-the-minute data, on American Negro writers are scattered about in miscellaneous references. Very few works are devoted specifically or exclusively to the writings of Negroes.

Then, there are the many dark-hued writers who get one or two books into print and disappear from the literary scene. This not uncommon practice makes it by no means less difficult to find contemporary records concerning Aframerican writers.

After a brief acknowledgment of the pioneer Negro writers, the period being surveyed begins with Charles Waddell Chestnutt and ends with Richard Wright.

In the Critical Survey section of this compilation an attempt has been made to discuss background in Negro writing, and ideas, influences, and techniques of present-day scribblers. Critical comment may differ from popular and literary evaluations with no real need for apology.

The bio-bibliographical sketches fluctuate with the importance of the writer and the amount of material available. In many cases information has been solicited from publishers and authors themselves for desired data.

Descriptive bio-bibliographies for thirty-six writers are included in this volume. They are more or less complete. Some are not as informative as might be hoped because only a scant bit

of material could be found regarding the person. In several instances writers whose works are evaluated in the Critical Survey section do not appear among the bio-bibliographies. This fact may be attributed to an obvious cause: biographical information was not available.

As a guide to the reader and the student an attempt at systematization of titles has been made. Often classification has been difficult and the decision in the last analysis made with some temerity. The anomalous classification, Miscellany, when used, has been seized upon as a final resort. An asterisk (\*) has been placed before titles of volumes considered of greater literary merit than the general run.

The following abbreviations which may need clarification are used in some of the bio-bibliographies: d.n.k., date not known; NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; ?, uncertainty of fact.

This handbook is written with the student of literature at Negro institutions of higher learning in mind. It is hoped that it will prove beneficial to the college student, the reference worker, the instructor in contemporary Negro writing, and the general public as well.

Indebtedness is acknowledged with pleasure to Professor Robert W. Conover, as major instructor, and to Professor Mallam W. Davis, head of the department of English, for their assistance and counsel in this study.

T. B. N.

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A CRITICAL SURVEY

## THE BACKGROUND OF NEGRO WRITING

It takes no great intellect to deduce the importance of environmental influence on the type of literature produced by a people. A brief glance at the physical and intellectual environment of the Negro, from his first feeble experiments in the literary field to contemporary times, will indicate the slow development of talent among Negro writers.

Brown America's initial attempts in the quill-driving sphere were made during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Slavery flourished as an American economic institution. Few Negroes had the type or amount of education that makes for literary genius. Natural ability may or may not have been lacking. That is hard to say. It is not surprising that prior to the Civil War writing done by Negroes was of more social than literary interest. The slave used his pen as an instrument of emotional outlet, just as he did his religion.

In the main, the resulting manuscripts were homespun of the self-taught. Subject matter revolved about personal suffering and religious revelation. Much of the material was disjointed; some of the grammar flagrantly ignored any semblance of rules. Reasoning was childlike. Much of the material published during the abolition period never should have been put on paper, certainly not in print. Often the autobiographical writing of bondsmen was fabricated.

The post-Civil-War period taught the Negro to make an ef-

fort at estimating what he could and could not do. It was a determining period in the history of American Negro literature.

Negro writing between that time and the post-World-War period was for the most part unimpressive. Two or three persons worthy of note wrote during this era - Charles Waddell Chestnutt, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and W. E. B. DuBois.

Defiance and cynicism prevailed in the writing of Negroes following the World War. The child writer had become a man - but an embittered, rebellious one. A new note of racial consciousness was sounded in the works of the dark-skinned.

The majority of the Negroes themselves were unaware of the Negro renaissance of the 1920's. But it was a new Negro who wrote - refusing to moan about the colored man's plight in a white world, eager to try his wings in the winds of sweet self-reliance.

#### White Man Dabs in Color

Real interest in the Negro as stuff for literary material came about 1924. Negroes wrote of economic hardships of the race, exploitation through peonage, "passing" over into the white race, and segregation. On the other hand, white writers considered the Negro a literary curiosity. In 1926, Carl Van Vechten's Nigger Heaven appeared. It was a highly entertaining caricature of Negro "society" and had a marked influence on Negro writers of the 'twenties.

T. S. Stripling, Paul Green, Julia Peterkin, Edward Shelton, Eugene O'Neill, Ridgely Torrence, Du Bose Heyward, and Octavus



Roy Cohen have exploited Negroes to the fullest. Stribling, Heyward, and Miss Peterkin have done some effective writing on southern Negro life. Cohen is renowned for his perfection in retaining authentic Negro dialect in his short stories. Paul Green, Eugene O'Neill, Edward Shelton, and Ridgely Torrence have realized the intrinsic merit of the Negro as a histrionic source.

### Pioneer Negro Scribblers

The first prose and poetry of colored writers appeared within the same year. In 1760 Jupiter Hammon, A Long Island slave about 40 years of age, composed a broadside of 88 lines. Its title was long and awkward - "An Evening Thought: Salvation by Christ with Penitential Cries". This poem was written for the ear rather than the eye. It has some irregularity in rhyme combination and certain accents call for unheard of pronounciations. The poem has an unusual sound sense common only to Negro folk poetry. Briton Hammon during the same period had a prose pamphlet published in Boston. It was entitled "A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A Negro Man".

Ten years later Phillis Wheatley made her literary debut with a piece of poetry, "An Elegiac Poem on the Death of George Whitefield". Her poems are far better than those of Hammon. She copied the verse form of Alexander Pope and was influenced also by the works of John Milton. Eighteen of her 46 poems are elegies. Her emphasis is always on abstractions, and seldom are her lyrics genuine. Miss Wheatley was a slave from Senegal,

Africa. She was born about 1754 and educated by her mistress. She died in 1784, after an unhappy marriage and poor health.

The most graphic writer on religious subjects was John Marrant, who wrote from 1785 to 1789. "A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with J. Marrant, A Black --- Taken Down from His Own Relation", his "Journal" which is an adaptation of the narrative, and "A Sermon", a panoramic history of the world since Creation, make up his literary achievements.

Spanning the gap between these eighteenth century writers and the post-Civil-War authors was George Moses Horton, a slave janitor at the University of North Carolina. He was the most important poet between Miss Wheatley and Dunbar. Three volumes of his poetry have been published.

#### Chestnutt and Dunbar

Negro fiction in America meritorious of the name properly begins with Clevelander Charles Waddell Chestnutt, who lived from 1858 to 1932. His writing falls mainly into the period of the 'eighties and 'nineties of the nineteenth century. His collections and novels date from 1899, but he had written short stories and sketches for periodicals previously.

Chestnutt was the first Negro to have "made" the Atlantic Monthly. His subject matter includes the results of miscegenation in the South, the difficulties which face the Negro who is "passing". But Chestnutt is happiest in his folk tales. His "Conjure Woman" stories have a framework similar to Joel Chandler Harris' "Uncle Remus" tales. Chestnutt is at his best in these.

He was a pioneer in the serious treatment of stories suggested by the color line.

The Negro literati owes much, too, to Poet Paul Laurence Dunbar who gained recognition with his volumes of verse. James Whitcomb Riley was impressed by Dunbar's verse and paved the way for his progress. His dialect poetry displays perfection in rhythm and flashes of unforced humor. These are the works which made him famous.

In his standard English poems, Dunbar lacks a freshness and humor for which his dialect verse is praised. A certain vigor and naturalness of style is lost. And yet, even this poetry is better than that of any preceding Negro.

Dunbar is mediocre and hopelessly inept in his prose. In fact, it is the tepid sentimentality of Dunbar that contemporary Negro writers have attempted to avoid.

#### Tendencies and Literary Value

Instability in the literary field is responsible to the Negro writer's habit of creating a few good novels and several impressive poems and then disappearing from the typewriter-pounding scene. It is heart-rending - the brief existence of Negroes as writers. Lack of money, lack of time, and the precariousness of writing as a livelihood cause aspirants to shy away from chirography as a career.

Much of Negro writing is entirely too subjective. Propaganda is justified in any work of art but one does not enjoy being pinioned on all sides and told, "He's all wrong," "It isn't

the thing to do," or "Isn't it a shame?" all through a book. One likes to use one's intellect rather than one's emotions. Negro literature fairly seethes with condemnation, complaint, hurt pride. Happily, writers of the past decade are getting away from this tendency. Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and Zora Neale Hurston take a more objective point of view.

A product of the environment, Negro literature has been a vehicle of criticism of prejudice, segregation, "passing" over into the white race, social injustice, and imitation of the whites; of approval of race pride in achievement and the race itself. Today writers are considering these problems as a small phase in the bigger problems of the lives of their individual characters. Waters E. Turpin has illustrated this tendency in his novels.

As to literary merit, most of the Negro literature rates low in technique in accordance with the best American standards of art. It ranks high in the second rate class, however. The style of these works is with few exceptions heavy and ponderous - more suitable for essays and sociological works, in the main. Plots are usually weak and sometimes even ridiculous.

Contemporary literature still hopes for a great American novel from the pen of a dark-hued writer. Works of writers of the past several years have added faith in the fulfillment of such a hope.

## THE NOVEL

A Book of the Month selection of 1940, Richard Wright's Native Son brought forth an interest in the Negro novelists never shown before. It revived a curiosity about novels written by Negroes within the past two decades. Articles in contemporary periodicals pondered the potentialities of Negroes as writers and made prophecies on the future of Negro fiction.

Charles Waddell Chestnutt's novels were the first by a Negro worthy of attention. His three volumes were written during the first decade of the twentieth century. Paul Laurence Dunbar has four novels to his credit.

There was a lull between Chestnutt and Dunbar and the Harlem renaissance of the 'twenties, when Negroes suddenly began producing novels. The creations of the 'twenties are conspicuous for their portraiture of Negroes of the intellectual group. Walter White's Fire in the Flint has a doctor for its dominant character. Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen delight in painting detailed word pictures of the socially elect women of the colored race and their tribulations in a cruel world. W. E. B. DuBois concerns himself with an Indian princess in Dark Princess. None of these works rises above the mediocre.

In direct contrast to those who would impress upon their readers the social and intellectual attainments of a race, Wallace Thurman associates an artificial glamour with the Negro. But he never manages to make his characters take on a semblance

of flesh-and-blood people.

There are those who found material for novels in the proletarian Negro. Rudolph Fisher and Claude McKay did this. And in the 'thirties and the past years Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright extolled the same theme.

Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, though better known in the realm of poetry, have each written a single novel. They are entertaining pieces of fiction. The former's novel is well done, while the latter has created a work a bit above the average.

Waters E. Turpin has done two interesting novels which do not make too much of the segregation problem and are quite well written. Edna Ferber, novelist, believed at the time of its publication his first novel, These Low Grounds, "possibly the greatest novel ever written by a Negro". His second novel is better. It is more contemporary and has far less in the way of unhappy small climaxes. The plots of both novels are well planned.

Zora Neale Hurston gives promise of greatness in her novels. She is much more objective than earlier writers and does not disdain to portray her characters as realistically as she knows how, regardless of public or race disapproval.

Richard Wright, who is better known than most Negro writers, published four novellas on lynch violence, Uncle Tom's Children, in 1938. With his objectivity and lack of sentimentality, he exhibits an intensity and eloquence which is powerful. Native Son, a later novel, dwarfs his first work. Its propaganda is obvious - the murderous potentialities of the United States Negro problem.

Realistically, and in spots beautifully written, it is not a book for the Pollyanna-minded.

G. S. Schuyler's satire is exceptionally good in Black No More. His treatment is impersonal enough to be effective.

Along with Wright, Turpin, and Miss Hurston, Arna Bontemps shows talent as a novelist. God Sends Sunday displays the excellent results of the light touch in fiction. In all of his writing Bontemps manages to ignore the race problem.

Negro novelists of the 'thirties rank far above those of the 'twenties. They are more objective; their plot structures are more sustained and consistent; their characters are genuinely human. Now, in the 'forties, novel writing by Negroes definitely looks to a brighter day and a greater success.

## THE SHORT STORY

Short stories of Negro writers are few and uncollected. It is difficult to find a market for much of the subject matter of colored short story weavers. Crisis and Opportunity magazines and Negro newspapers serve as reservoirs for some of this creative material.

Langston Hughes has a collected group of fourteen short stories, The Ways of White Folks. One, "The Blues I'm Playing", is superbly done, and "Cora Unashamed", too, is a commendable piece of writing.

Some of Jean Toomer's prose sketches and short stories are lyrically beautiful and smoothly written. They read like poetry. Indebted to Sherwood Anderson and Waldo Frank for his prose style, Toomer has established a precedent of self-revelation.

Nella Larsen's short stories, though few in number, are better done than her novels. Her style is not nearly so affected. Attempts at individualism are not so extreme.

Eric Walrond has a collection of short stories, Tropic Death, which are uneven in quality. "Drought" and "Subjection" reveal rare talent. There are other stories which prove difficult to puzzle out.

Zora Neale Hurston has contributed to periodicals some stories which are entertaining and well written.

The field of short story writing among Negroes is not so meagre as this brief commentary might imply. But there is a



spacious niche at the top for those would-be short story fabricators who have something of intrinsic worth to offer.

## POETRY

Almost contemporary himself and the forerunner of Negro poets of today was Paul Laurence Dunbar, who set something of a mark for others to attain. There are some who have reached and surpassed the achievement of this dialect versifier. Others have not fared as well.

Newer fashions in the poetic art which followed in the wake of Dunbar met with an instant response by modern Negro poets. The free verse, rhythmic strophes, biblical and Whitmanesque chants found ready pens willing to experiment with them.

His experience as a wanderer has served Langston Hughes adequately. The vagabond of Negro poets, he loves the little-trodden road, be it the open country or the urban pavement. His is a love of the humble folk. He shows his reader the meek, sensitive, erring colored people. Hughes is a singer of "the blues". He conforms, with artistic effectiveness, to certain rhyme schemes and line repetition in his poems in the volume, The Weary Blues - emphasizing primitive passion.

In his poetry there is freshness, even when artifice is present. He rises to eloquent nobility in such poems as "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and "Mother and Son". There is unconventionality in his form and style. He uses free verse forms more often than bound. A harsh realism prevails in some of his earlier compositions.

Countee Cullen's work came in for its share of praise at

the same time as Hughes' did. He is grounded in the traditional forms of writing and the influences of Keats and Tennyson, especially Keats, are apparent in much of his verse. Color and Copper Sun lean too heavily on these influences.

A master of the apigram, Cullen is little affected by his racial origin. In fact race seems almost an affectation. His technique is well developed, his execution neat. Cullen's verse is bold in metaphor and concept. It is influenced by his literary accomplishments just as the poetry of Hughes is not. The Black Christ is a very fluent work, but its fire is only a spark. In the main, Cullen's work shows intellectual and imaginative richness.

William Braithwaite deserves more recognition as a compiler of anthologies of poetry than as a poet. His two volumes of verse are not superior ones.

Gwendolyn Bennett, Jessie Fauset, Georgia Douglas, and Helene Johnson compose the Negro's feminine contribution to the poetic field, the disciples of Phillis Wheatley. Miss Bennett excels as a sonneteer; her lyrics are delicate and poignant. Jessie Fauset's light touch makes for entertaining verse, while Helene Johnson lends an interesting slant to colloquial poetry. Georgia Douglas Johnson's trenchant rhyme schemes have a trace of Sara Teasdale.

Claude McKay has written verse which scales the chords from the piquant tenderness of "Flame-Heart" to the austere virileness of "If We Must Die". He is rebellious and exercised to a degree that sometime mars his lyricisms. His is a strong, direct

poetry which is above par.

Cynic Frank Marshall Davis experiments in free verse. At times his resemblance to Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg places him at a disadvantage. He has a gift of irony and realistic portraiture. He is assonic and in rare instances his revelations are forced. In Black Men's Verse Davis is panoramic. At his best he is bitterly realistic.

God's Trombones, a group of seven Negro sermons in verse, is James Weldon Johnson's best volume of poetry. He has done some other poetic work, but none attains the near-genius of this assemblage of selections.

Perhaps the most lovely lyricist of all Negro poets is Jean Toomer, whose best prose reads like poetry. The beauty of his verse is sometimes drowned in feeling and becomes inarticulate in a surge of words.

The contemporary dialect poetry is not the traditional comic of the minstrel. It is the common, racy, genuine speech of the Negro in certain true-to-life circumstances. James Weldon Johnson and Sterling Means have done a little of this type of poetry.

Sterling Brown has written some excellent dialect poetry. He also possesses the ability to turn a sonnet according to rule. His most distinctive poetry is the picturesque lore of the Negro vagabond on the open road.

The poetry of Arna Bontemps is written in a quiet, even vein. His execution is careful and skilled. The fire of his poetry burns with a steady glow.

Poetic creations of Lewis Alexander, Anne Spencer, Waring Cuney (whose verse is deceptively simple), Raymond Dandridge, Frank Horne, and Fenton Johnson display a real ability in verse composition. Heart-Shape in the Dust, Robert E. Hayden's recent collection of poetry, shows promise of a new poet of creditable gift on the dark horizon.

The songs of the colored troubadours are not to be ranked with the best of modern poetry. Some are smudged carbon copies from greater poets. On the whole the verse is surprisingly better than one would suspect. There prevails in these lines a flowering of beauty and truth from the seed of long suffering and pent-up emotions in the prolific art of a race.

## THE DRAMA

American Negro drama is hardly a century old. First dramatic efforts were those of the American slave in song. The minstrel followed and then came the current drama.

Histrionics since the World War have been influenced by social and economic forces. Colored writers became incensed with a desire to present the realistic phases of Negro life, phases heretofore neglected. This desire has been crippled by too much ardour and eagerness. Subjects too often selected are racial friction, oppression, exploitation, and the consorting of white men with Negro women.

In 1920, Frank Wilson, a postal clerk, wrote "Sugar Cane", which was superior to many plays of the period. Eight years later his "Meek Mose" was published.

Another government employee, Willis Richardson, won the Spingarn Medal for 1925 with "The Broken Banjo". He has also written "The Deacon's Awakening", "The Chip Woman's Fortune", and "Mortgaged".

Dennis Donoghue attempted to rationalize the Scottsboro, Alabama, assault case in "Legal Murder" in 1933.

Deserting his interest in poetry for a time, Langston Hughes wrote "Mulatto" in 1935. He has done also several folk comedies.

John Mathews and Zora Neale Hurston have dabbled in drama creation with pleasing results. Jean Toomer and Ira Reid, too, have tried their luck with playwriting.

Negro playwrights do not give sufficient attention to their audience. Their propaganda is not subtle enough. In the dramatic field the surface has barely been scraped. A prediction for the future would be a most precarious and unwise thing.

BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHIES



Lewis Alexander, 1900-

Born in Washington, D. C. He studied at Howard University and the University of Pennsylvania. Alexander has been both an actor and an editor. He has written poetry since 1917, specializing in the Japanese form. Many of his poems have appeared in Opportunity and Carolina magazines.

Gwendolyn Bennett, 1902-

Born in Giddings, Texas. In 1924 she was graduated from Pratt Institute and became a teacher at Howard University. In 1925-26 she studied in Paris, after winning the Thousand Dollar Foreign Scholarship of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority in 1925. Her poems have been published in periodicals and anthologies.

She is at her best in delicate lyrical poems, such as

## Sonnet 2

Some things are very dear to me -  
 Such things as flowers bathed by rain  
 Or patterns traced upon the sea  
 Or crocuses where snow has lain...  
 The iridescence of a gem,  
 The moon's cool opalescent light,  
 Azaleas and the scent of them,  
 And honeysuckles in the night.  
 And many sounds are also dear -  
 Like winds that sing among the trees  
 Or crickets calling from the weir  
 Or Negroes humming melodies.  
 But dearer far than all surmise  
 Are sudden tear-drops in your eyes.

Arna (Wendell) Bontemps, 1902-

Born in Alexandria, Louisiana, the son of Paul and Marie

Bontemps. His preparatory education was acquired in San Fernando (California) Academy from 1917 to 1920. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Pacific Union College, Angwin, California in 1923 and did graduate work at the University of Chicago in 1936.

Bontemps married Alberta Johnson in 1926. They have five children. From 1923 to 1928 he taught in New York, Huntsville, Alabama, and Chicago, respectively. He was awarded the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship for 1938-39. In 1926 he received the Crisis magazine poetry prize; the Opportunity magazine short story prize for 1932.

"The vital point in writing real literature is to convey a sense of the passage of time," according to Bontemps. "That's the point in all art, as I see it."

An example of the quiet, even tone of his stanza is his

#### Blight

I have seen a lovely thing  
Stark before a whip of weather:  
The tree that was so wistful after spring  
Beating barren twigs together.

The birds that came there one by one,  
The sensuous leaves that used to sway  
And whisper there at night, all ere gone,  
Each has vanished in its way.

And this whip is on my heart;  
There is no sound that it allows,  
No little song that I may start  
But I hear the beating of dead boughs.

#### Bibliography

##### Novels

\*God Sends Sunday, 1931; Popo and Fifina (with Langston Hughes), 1932; You Can't Pet a Possum, 1934; Black Thunder, 1936; Sd-Faced Boy, 1937; Drums at Dusk, 1939.

W(illiam) S(tanley) Braithwaite, 1878-

Born in Boston, the son of William and Emma Braithwaite. He was mainly self-educated. He married Emma Kelley of Montross, Virginia, in 1903; seven children. He has received honorary degrees from Talladega College and Atlanta University, in 1918. In that same year Braithwaite was awarded the Spingarn Medal for services to the Negro.

He is a professor of literature at Atlanta University in Georgia. His anthologies of verse are more widely known than his volumes of original poetry that have been published.

Braithwaite writes, "The requisites of good writing are certainly not in the technique of language, as most of our academicians would have us believe. . . . What we do with words as a means of communication is determined by our power to pattern the aesthetic form."

One of his better known poems is

Seintilla

I kissed a kiss in youth  
Upon a dead man's brow;  
And that was long ago, -  
And I'm a grown man now.

It's lain there in the dust,  
Thirty years and more; -  
My lips that set a light  
At a dead man's door.

Bibliography

Poetry

Lyrics of Life and Love, 1904; The House of Falling Leaves, 1908; Sandy Star, 1926, 1928.

Novels

Going Over Tindal - A Fragment Wrenched from the Life of Titus Jabson, 1928.

Short Stories

Frost on the Green Leaf, 1928.

Nonfiction

The Poetic Year for 1916, 1916; The Story of the Great War, 1919; Our Essayists and Critics of Today, 1920.

Edited and Compiled Works

The Book of Elizabethan Verse, 1906; The Book of Georgian Verse, 1908; The Book of Restoration Verse, 1909; Anthology of Magazine Verse and Yearbook of American Poetry (17 volumes), 1913 - 1929; Golden Treasury of Magazine Verse, 1918; The Book of Modern British Verse, 1919; Victory! Celebrated by 38 American Poets, 1919; Anthology of Massachusetts Poets, 1931; Our Lady's Choir, A Contemporary Anthology of Verse by Catholic Sisters, 1931; The Story of the Years Between 1918-39, 1940; Poems, New and Selected, 1940.

Benjamin Griffith Brawley, 1882-1939

Born in Columbia, South Carolina. He was graduated from the Atlanta Baptist College, now Morehouse, in 1901. Five years later he received another Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Chicago. In 1908, Brawley received a Master of Arts degree at Harvard. He has received honorary degrees from Shaw University, 1927, and Morehouse College, 1937.

Brawley married Hilda Prowd of Jamaica in 1912. He was professor of English at Shaw and at Morehouse. In 1931 he became professor of English at Howard University, Washington, D. C. He held that position until his death, February 1, 1939. He was known for his nonfiction works. He contributed to literary and religious journals.

### Bibliography

#### Nonfiction

A Short History of the American Negro, 1913; The Negro in Literature and Art, 1918; A Social History of the American Negro, 1921; A Short History of the English Drama, 1921; A New Survey of English Literature, 1925; Freshman Year English, 1929; Doctor Dillard of the Jeanes Fund, 1930; History of the English Hymn, 1932; Early Negro American Writers, 1935; Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1936; The Negro Genius, 1937; Negro Builders and Heroes, 1937.

#### Sterling A(llen) Brown, 1901-

Born in Washington, D. C. He was graduated from Williams College in 1922. A year later he received his Master of Arts degree from Harvard University. Many of his poems and reviews have appeared in Opportunity magazine. Typical of his modern dialect verses are these lines:

I laks yo' kin' of lovin'  
 Ain't never caught you wrong  
 But it jes ain' nachal  
 Fo' to stay here long;

It jes ain' nachal  
 Fo' a railroad man  
 With a itch fo' travellin'  
 He cain't understan'...

## Bibliography

Poetry

Southern Road, 1932.

Charles W(addell) Chestnutt, 1858-1932

Born in Cleveland, Ohio. He began teaching at 16; did newspaper work in New York City. Later he became a Cleveland stenographer and was admitted to the bar in 1887. He died November 15, 1932.

## Bibliography

Novels

The House Behind the Cedars, 1900; The Marrow of Tradition, 1901; The Colonel's Dream, 1905.

Short Stories

The Conjure Woman, 1899; The Wife of his Youth, and Other Stories of the Color Line, 1899.

Countee Cullen, 1903-

Born in New York City, the son of an Episcopalean minister. He was educated in the New York public schools and at New York University, being graduated in 1925. He received his Master of Arts degree from Harvard University in 1926 in English literature. He married Mina Y. DuBois in 1928; divorced a year later.

Cullen began writing early. At 14 he had published poems in Modern School magazine. In 1925 he won four prizes, including

the John Reed Memorial prize offered by Poetry. From 1926 to 1928 he was assistant editor of Opportunity magazine. Cullen was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1928. He has written one novel. His specialty is poetry.

He is a Phi Beta Kappa, a member of Alpha Phi Alpha social fraternity. At present he teaches in the New York public schools and does very little writing. He has contributed to many popular magazines.

These two epitaphs illustrate his excellence in epigrammatic verse:

#### A Lady I Know

She thinks that even up in heaven  
Her class lies late and snores,  
While poor black cherubs rise at seven  
To do celestial chores.

#### For One Who Gayly Sowed His Oats

My days were a thing for me to live,  
For others to deplore;  
I took of life all it could give:  
Rind, Inner Fruit, and Core.

#### Bibliography

##### Novels

\*One Way to Heaven, 1932.

##### Poetry

Color, 1925; Copper Sun, 1927; \*The Ballad of the Brown Girl, 1927; The Medea: And Some Poems, 1935.

##### Edited Works

Caroling Dusk: An Anthology of Verse by Negro Poets, 1927.

Raymond Dandridge, 1882-

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was paralyzed at 30, has written most of his poetry a-bed. Typically Dandridge is

## Zalka Peetruza

(Who Was Christened Lucy Jane)

She dance, near nude, to tom-tom beat,  
With swaying arms and flying feet,  
'Mid swirling spangles, gauze and lace,  
Her all was dancing - save her face.

A conscience, dumb to brooding fears,  
Companioned hearing deaf to cheers;  
A body, marshalled by the will,  
Kept dancing while a heart stood still:

And eyes obsessed with vacant stare,  
Looked over heads to empty air,  
As though they sought to find therein  
Redemption for a maiden sin.

'Twas thus, amid force driven grace,  
We found the lost look on her face;  
And then, to us did it occur  
That, though we saw - we saw not her.

## Bibliography

Poetry

The Poet, 1920; Zalka Peetruza, 1928.

Frank Marshall Davis, 1905-

Born in Arkansas City, Kansas. He attended the public schools there, Friends College in Wichita, and Kansas State College, Manhattan. At the present time he is feature editor of the Associated Negro Press, Chicago. His creative field is poetry.

To compose acceptable verse, Davis writes, "one should have



a sound knowledge of the language and at least a speaking acquaintance with the poetry of others, both past and present. . . strive for originality of expression. . . weed out nonessentials. The only way to write poetry is to try to write poetry."

### I Sing No New Songs

Once I cried for new songs to sing...e black rose  
...e brown sky...the moon for my buttonhole...  
pink dreams for the table

Later I learned life is a servant girl...dusting  
the same pieces yesterday, today, tomorrow...  
e never ending one two three one two three one  
two three

The dreams of Milton were the dreams of Lindsay...  
drinking corn liquor, wearing e derby, dancing e  
foxtrot...a saxophone for a harp

Ideas rise with new mornings but never die...only  
names, places, people change...you are born, love,  
fight, tire and stop being...Caesar died with e  
knife in his guts...Jim Colosimo from revolver  
bullets

So I shall take aged things...bearded dreams...e  
silver dollar moon worn thin from the spending  
...model a new dress for this one...get that one  
e new hat...teach the other to forget the minuet  
...then I shall send them into the street

And if passersby stop and say "Who is that? I never  
saw this pretty girl before" or if they say..."Is  
that old woman still alive? I thought she died  
years ago"...if they speak these words, I shall  
neither smile nor swear...those who walked before  
me, those who come after me, may make better  
clothes, teach a more graceful step...but the  
dreams of Homer neither grow nor wilt...

### Bibliography

#### Poetry

\*Black Man's Verse, 1935; I am the American Negro, 1937;  
Through Sepia Eyes, 1938.

W(illiam) E. B(urghardt) DuBois, 1868-

Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, the son of Alfred and Mary (Burghardt) DuBois. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Fisk University, Tennessee, in 1888; another A. B. degree two years later at Harvard. In 1891 a Master of Arts degree and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1896 were presented him at Harvard. He has honorary degrees from Howard, Atlanta, and Fisk Universities. Dr. DuBois has studied at the University of Berlin.

In 1896 he married Mina Gomer of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; has one daughter. From 1896 to 1910 he was professor of economics and history at Atlanta University; 1910 - 1932, director of publications of the NAACP and editor of the Crisis magazine, organ of the NAACP. Dr. DuBois has been since 1932 professor of sociology at Atlanta. He organized the Pan-African Congress in 1919.

Though he has written some fiction, he is better known for his nonfiction material.

#### Bibliography

##### Novels

Dark Princess, 1928.

##### Autobiography

Dusk of the Dawn, 1940.

##### Other Nonfiction

The Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1896; The Philadelphia Negro, 1899; \*The Souls of Black Folk, 1903; John Brown, 1909; The Quest of the Silver Fleece, 1911; The Negro, 1915; Dark - water, 1920; Black Reconstruction, 1935; Black Folk - Then and Now, 1939.

Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1872-1906

Born in Dayton, Ohio, the son of Joshua and Matilda Dunbar. His first poetical achievement was accomplished when at 13 he recited original verse in Sunday school. He wrote the class song for his high school graduating group in 1891. After graduation he worked as an elevator boy for four dollars a week in a downtown building. He gave readings and did not get too many rejection slips for the manuscripts he sent to magazines and newspapers.

In 1892 Dunbar impressed the Western Association of Writers, meeting in Dayton, when he gave the welcome address in original verse. Poet James Whitcomb Riley was interested and did much to further Dunbar's career as a writer. Dunbar's first book of verse was published in December 1892. At 20 he was developing the dialect poetry for which he is famous.

He worked as clerical assistant for Frederick Douglass in the summer of 1893. Near the turn of the century he was employed in the Library of Congress. Dunbar married Alice Ruth Moore of New Orleans. In 1899 he became critically ill. From that time until his death, February 9, 1906, his was a search for health, his fame increasing the while. "Little Brown Baby" is a sample of the dialect verse which Dunbar loved:

Little brown baby wif apa'klin' eyes,  
 Come to yo' pappy an' set on his knee.  
 What you been doin', auh - makin' aen' plea?  
 Look et dat bib - You's ez du'ty ez me.  
 Look at dat mouf - dat's merlaasea, I bet;  
 Come hyeah, Maris, an' wipe off his han'a.  
 Beea gwine to ketch you an' eat you up yit,  
 Bein' so aticky en' sweet - goodness lan'si

Little brown baby wif apa'klin' eyes  
 Who's pappy's darlin' an' who's pappy chile?  
 Who is it all de day nevah once tries  
 Fu' to be croas, er once losea dat smile?  
 Whah did you git dem teef? My, you's a scamp!  
 Whah did dat dimple come f'om in yo' chin?  
 Pappy do' know you - I b'lieves you's a tramp;  
 Mammy, dia hyeah's some ol' atraggler got in!

Let'a th'ow him ouden de do' in de aan',  
 We do' want stragglars a-layin' 'roun' hyeah;  
 Let's gin him 'way to de big buggah-man;  
 I know he's hidin' erroun' hyeah right neah.  
 Buggah-man, buggah-man, come in de do',  
 Hyeah's a bad boy you kin have fu' to eat.  
 Memmy an' pappy do' want him no mo',  
 Swaller him down f'om his haid to his feet!

Dah, now, I t'ought dat you'd hug me up close.  
 Go back, ol' buggah, you sha'nt have dis boy.  
 He ein't no tramp, ner no atraggler, of oo'ae;  
 He's pappy's pa'dner an' playmate en' joy.  
 Come to you' pallet now - go to you' res';  
 Wisht you could allua know esse en' cleah akies;  
 Wisht you could atay jes' a chile on my breas' -  
 Little brown baby wif apa'klin' eyes!

## Bibliography

### Poetry

Oak and Ivy, 1892; Majors and Minors, 1895; Lyrica of Lowly  
 Life, 1896; Lyrica of the Hearthside, d.n.k.; Lyrica of Love and  
 Laughter, d.n.k.; Lyrica of Sunshine and Shadow, d.n.k.

### Novels

The Uncalled, d.n.k.; The Love of Landry, d.n.k.; The Pa-  
 natics, d.n.k.; The Sport of the Gods, d.n.k.

### Stories and Sketches

Folks from Dixie, d.n.k.; The Strength of Gideon, d.n.k.;  
In Old Plantation Days, d.n.k.; The Heart of Happy Hollow, d.n.k.

### Jessie R(edmon) Fauset

Born in Philadelphia and educated in the public schools of that city. She was graduated from Cornell University and received a Master of Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Miss Fauset has studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. Besides writing fiction, she teaches and knows an interest in editorial work. In private life she is Mrs. Herbert Harris.

Miss Fauset's verse is light and entertaining.

#### La Vie C'est La Vie

On summer afternoons I sit  
Quiescent by you in the park,  
And idly watch the sunbeams gild  
And tint the ash-trees' bark.

Or else I watch the squirrels frisk  
And chaffer in the grassy lane;  
And all the while I mark your voice  
Breaking with love and pain.

I know a woman who would give  
Her chance of heaven to take my place;  
To see the love-light in your eyes,  
The love-glow on your face!

And there's a man whose lightest word  
Can set my chilly blood afire;  
Fulfilment of his least behest  
Defines my life's desire.

But he will none of me, Nor I  
Of you. Nor you of her. 'Tis said  
The world is full of jests like these. -  
I wish that I were dead.

## Bibliography

Novels

There is Confusion, 1924; Plum Bun, 1929; The Chinaberry Tree, 1931; Comedy, American Style, 1933.

Rudolph Fisher, 1897-?

Born in Washington, D. C. He was educated in the Providence, Rhode Island, public schools. He received his Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees from Brown University. In 1927 he received his Doctor of Medicine degree at Howard University. Dr. Fisher did medical research at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons from 1925 to 1927. He has two novels and some short stories to his credit. His untimely death, sometime in the 'thirties, clipped what promised to be a worthy literary career in its infancy.

## Bibliography

Novels

Walls of Jericho, 1928; The Conjure-Man Dies, 1932.

E. Franklin Frazier, 1894-

Born in Baltimore, Maryland. He was educated at Howard and Clark Universities. In 1921-22 he studied in Denmark on an American Scandinavian Foundation Scholarship. His essays on social problems have appeared in many of the contemporary periodicals.

Frank Horne, 1899-

Born in New York City. His poetry has not been collected into a volume, but the amount to his credit is noteworthy. His poems have appeared in Crisis and Opportunity magazines - and a few others.

(James) Langston Hughes, 1902-

Born in Joplin, Missouri, the son of James and Carrie (Langston) Hughes. He was graduated from the Central High School of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1920, studying at Columbia University in 1921-22. He was graduated from Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, in 1929.

Hughes has known an adventurous life. Running away to sea three times, he worked on voyages to Europe and Africa; has lived in Mexico, France, and Italy. Vachel Lindsay discovered his gift for writing verse while Hughes was a busboy in a Washington hotel.

He was winner of first prize in the Opportunity magazine contest of 1925; was first prize winner in the Witter Bynner undergraduate prize contest in 1926; winner of the Harmon Gold Award for Literature in 1930; the Guggenheim Fellowship for creative writing in 1935.

Hughes' short stories and poetry have been published in many of the popular current periodicals. The Messenger, a Negro magazine, now defunct, bought his first short stories at ten dollars

per. The editor said they were very bad short stories "but better than any other he could find, so he published them". Hughes has done a limited amount of playwrighting. He is a member of Omega Psi Phi social fraternity. He spent 1932-33 in Russia; was the Madrid correspondent for the Baltimore Afro-American in 1937.

Typical of Hughes in his "blues singing" mood is

Po' Boy Blues

When I was home da  
Sunshina seemed like gold.  
When I was home de  
Sunshina seemed like gold.  
Since I come up north de  
Whole damn world's turned cold.

I was a good boy,  
Never dona no wrong.  
Yas, I was a good boy,  
Never done no wrong,  
But this world is weary  
An' da road is hard an' long.

I fall in love with  
A gal I thought was kind.  
I fall in love with  
A gal I thought was kind.  
She made me losa ma money  
An' almost losa ma mind.

Weary, weary  
Early, early in de morn.  
Weary, weary  
Early, early in de morn.  
I's so weary  
I wish I'd never baan born.

In an antirely different vein, Hughes' timbre changes:



To a Little Lover-Lass, Dead

She  
Who searched for lovers  
In the night  
Has gone the quiet way  
Into the still,  
Dark land of death  
Beyond the rim of day.

Now like a little lonely waif  
She walks  
An endless street  
And gives her kiss to nothingness.  
Would God his lips were sweet!

Bibliography

Poetry

\*Weary Blues, 1926; Fine Clothes to the Jew, 1927; Dear  
Lovely Death, 1931; The Dream Keeper, 1935.

Novels

\*Not Without Laughter, 1930; Popo and Fifina (with Arna Bon-  
temps), 1932.

Short Stories

\*The Ways of White Folks, 1934.

Autobiography

The Big Sea, 1940.

Plays

Mulatto, 1936.

Zora Neale Hurston

Born in Eatonville, Florida, the daughter of a clergyman.  
She was graduated from Morgan College in 1921; also received a  
Bachelor of Arts degree at Barnard College, 1932. Miss Hurston

did research in anthropology with Dr. Frans Boas and writing on folklore from 1928 to 1932. She won the Guggenheim Fellowship for 1936, spending her year in Haiti and British West Indies. Tell My Horse was the volume which resulted. She has written several uncollected one-act plays.

Miss Hurston is the head of the drama department at the North Carolina College for Negroes, Durham. She is a member of the American Folklore Society, the American Anthropology Society and Zet Phi Beta social sorority.

#### Bibliography

##### Novels

Jonah's Gourd Vine, 1934; Mules and Men, 1935; \*Their Eyes were Watching God (also published in England and Italy), 1937; Moses, Man of the Mountains, 1939.

##### Miscellany

Tell My Horse (published in London, 1939, as Voodoo Gods), 1938.

##### Fenton Johnson, 1888-

Born in Chicago. His chief interest is in poetry. Johnson was the first Negro poet to desert the conventional forms. Influences of Sandburg are in his verse.

## Tired

I am tired of work. I am tired of building up somebody else's civilization.

Let us take a rest, M'Lissy Jane.

I will go down to the Last Chance Saloon, drink a gallon or two of gin, shoot a game or two or dice and sleep the rest of the night on one of Mike's barrels.

You will let the old shanty go to rot, the white people's clothes turn to dust, and the Calvary Baptist Church sink to the bottomless pit.

You will spend your days forgetting you married me and your nights hunting the warm gin Mike serves the ladies in the rear of the Last Chance Saloon.

Throw the two children into the river; civilization has given us too many. It is better to die than to grow up and find out that you are colored.

Pluck the stars out of the heavens. The stars mark our destiny. The stars marked our destiny.

I am tired of civilization.

## Bibliography

Poetry

A Little Dreaming, 1914; Visions of the Dusk, 1915; Songs of the Soil, 1916.

Georgia Douglas Johnson, 1886-

Born in Atlanta, Georgia. She studied at Oberlin College; her poetry collected in three booklets.

## The Dreams of the Dreamer

The dreams of the dreamer  
Are life-drops that pass  
That break in the heart  
To the soul's hour-glass.

The songs of the singer  
Are tones that repeat  
The cry of my heart  
Till it ceases to beat.

## Bibliography

Poetry

The Heart of a Woman, 1918; Bronze, 1922; An Autumn Love Cycle, 1928.

Melene Johnson, 1890-

Born in Boston. Her poetry has appeared in Opportunity, Vanity Fair, several New York dailies and in various collections and anthologies.

James Weldon Johnson, 1871-1938

Born in Jacksonville, Florida. He was educated at Atlanta University and at Columbia, where he received his Master of Arts degree. His was a varied career - teacher, writer, diplomat, secretary of the NAACP.

He was the first Negro to hold a consular post - at Venezuela and Nicaragua for seven years - and the only Negro ever to command a naval attachment, 1912, the attachment being at Nicaragua. He became secretary of the NAACP and occupied the chair of creative literature at Fisk University until his death in an automobile accident. His wife also died in the accident. He was at one time visiting professor at New York University.

Johnson was presented the Harmon Gold Award for Literature in 1928. Three years earlier he had received the Spingarn Medal for services to the Negro. In 1933 he was awarded the W. E. B.

DuBois Prize for Negro Literature. He held honorary degrees from Tallegda College, 1917, and Howard, 1923; was a member of the Academy of Political Science and the Ethical Society.

The best of his poetry is included in the seven Negro sermons of God's Trombones, one of which is this supplication.

Listen, Lord - A Prayer

O Lord, we come this morning  
Knee-bowed and body-bent  
Before thy throne of grace.  
O Lord -- this morning --  
Bow our hearts beneath our knees,  
Bow our hearts in some lonesome valley.  
We come this morning -  
Like empty pitchers to a full fountain,  
With no merits of our own.  
O Lord - open up a window of heaven,  
And lean out far over the battlements of glory,  
And listen this morning.

Lord, have mercy on proud and dying sinners -  
Sinners hanging over the mouth of hell,  
Who seem to love their distance well.  
Lord - ride by this morning -  
Mount your milk-white horse,  
And ride-a this morning -  
And in your ride, ride by old hell,  
Ride by the dingy gates of hell,  
And stop poor sinners in their headlong plunge.

And now, O Lord, this man of God,  
Who breaks the bread of life this morning -  
Shadow him in the hollow of thy hand,  
And keep him out of the gunshot of the devil.  
Take him, Lord - this morning -  
Wash him with hyssop inside and out,  
Hang him up and drain him dry of sin.  
Pin his ear to the wisdom-post,  
And make his words sledge hammers of truth -  
Seating on the iron heart of sin.  
Lord God, this morning -  
Put his eye to the telescope of eternity,  
And let him look upon the paper walls of time.  
Lord, turpentine his imagination,  
Put perpetual motion in his arms,  
Fill him full of the dynamite of thy power,  
Anoint him all over with the oil of thy salvation,  
And set his tongue on fire.

And now, O Lord -  
 When I've done drunk my last cup of sorrow -  
 When I've been called everything but a child of God -  
 When I'm done travelling up the rough side of the  
     mountain -  
 O - Mary's Baby -  
 When I start down the steep and slippery steps of  
     death -  
 When this old world begins to rock beneath my feet -  
 Lower me to my dusty grave in peace  
 To wait for that great gittin' up morning - Amen.

### Bibliography

#### Poetry

Fifty Year, and Other Poems, 1917; "God's Trombones, 1927;  
 Saint Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day, 1936.

#### Novels

The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man, 1912.

#### Autobiography

Along This Way, 1933.

#### Other Nonfiction

Black Manhattan, 1930; Negro Americans, What Now?, 1938.

#### Edited Works

The Book of American Negro Poetry (with J. Rosamond Johnson), 1931.

#### Nella Larsen, 1893-

Born in Chicago, the daughter of a Danish woman and a Negro man from the Virgin Islands. Her father died when she was two and her mother married a man of her own race and nationality. She and her half-sister, child of the second marriage, attended a private school. At 16, she visited relatives of her mother in Copenhagen for three years.

Back in America, she took nurse training in New York City. But she did not find work as head nurse of the Hospital at Tuskegee Institute congenial. She returned to New York and attended the Library School of the New York Public Library. On graduating, she worked as an assistant and later as children's librarian in the New York Public Library until 1926. She married a research physicist.

#### Bibliography

##### Novels

Quicksand, 1928; Passing, 1929.

##### Alain LeRoy Locke, 1886-

Born in Philadelphia. He attended the Philadelphia public schools, received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Harvard University in 1907. He was a Rhodes scholar to Oxford from 1907 to 1910, studying at the University of Berlin the following year.

Dr. Locke received his doctor's degree from Harvard in 1918. He has been professor of philosophy at Howard University since 1917, is a member of Phi Beta Sigma social fraternity. His articles on social problems and cultural arts are authoritative.

#### Bibliography

##### Nonfiction

Race Contracts and Inter-racial Relations, 1916; The New Negro, 1925; The Negro in America, 1933; Frederick Douglas, A Biography of Anti-Slavery, 1935; The Negro and His Music, 1936; Negro Art - Past and Present, 1937; Bronze Booklet Series - Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1937.

Claude McKay, 1890-

Born in Sunny Ville, Jamaica, West Indies. He came to the United States in 1912. He studied at Tuskegee Institute in 1912 and at Kansas State College, Manhattan, the next two years. He left school to become a dining car waiter and worked as a waiter and porter until 1918. Then, from 1919 to 1922 he was associate editor of and contributor to the Liberator and the Masses.

McKay received the Harmon Gold Award in Literature in 1929. In 1937 he was honored by the James Weldon Johnson Literary Guild. He has spent considerable time in Russia, Germany, and France.

McKay was acclaimed the most rebellious of Negro poets because he wrote this poem,

If We Must Die

If we must die - let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.  
If we must die - oh, let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;  
Though far outnumbered, let us still be brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!  
What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but - fighting back.

In direct contrast is his poignant



### Flame-Heart

So much have I forgotten in ten years,  
 So much in ten brief years; I have forgot  
 What time the purple apples come to juice  
 And what month brings the shy forget-me-not;  
 Forgotten is the special, startling season  
 Of some beloved tree's a flowering and fruiting,  
 What time of year the ground doves brown the fields  
 And fill the noonday with their curious fluting:  
 I have forgotten much, but still remember  
 The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

I still recall the honey-fever grass,  
 But cannot bring back to mind just when  
 We rooted them out of the ping-wing path  
 To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.  
 I often try to think in what sweet month  
 The languid painted ladies used to dapple  
 The yellow bye road mazing from the main,  
 Sweet with the golden threada of the rose-apple:  
 I have forgotten, strange, but quite remember  
 The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

What weeks, what months, what time o' the mild year  
 We cheated school to have our fling at tops?  
 What days our wine-thrilled bodies pulsed with joy  
 Feasting upon blackberries in the copse?  
 Oh, some I know! I have embalmed the days,  
 Even the sacred moments, when we played,  
 All innocent of passion uncorrupt,  
 At noon and evening in the flame-heart's shade:  
 We were so happy, happy, - I remember  
 Beneath the poinsettia's red in warm December.

### Bibliography

#### Poetry

Songs of Jamaica, 1911; Constab Ballada, 1912; Spring in  
 New Hampshire, 1920; \*Harlem Shadowa, 1922.

#### Novels

\*Home to Harlem, 1927; Banjo, 1929; Gingertown, 1931;  
 Banana Bottom, 1933.

#### Autobiography

A Long Way from Home, 1937.

### Other Nonfiction

Harlem Metropolis, 1940.

### William Pickens, 1881-

Born in Anderson County, South Carolina. He was educated at Talladega College (A. B.), 1902; Yale University (A. B.), 1904; and Fisk University (A. M.), 1908. He has honorary degrees from Selma University, Texas, 1915, and Wiley College, Texas, 1918. He was a Phi Beta Kappa at Yale.

Pickens married Minnie McAlpine of Meridan, Mississippi, in 1905; four children. From 1909 to 1914 he taught foreign languages at Talladega. The next year he taught at Wiley. He was dean from 1915 to 1918 and vice president from 1918 to 1920 of Morgan College. He has been field secretary of the NAACP since 1920. He is a member of Omega Psi Phi social fraternity. Pickens visited in Europe in 1913, 1926-27, 1929, and 1932.

### Bibliography

#### Nonfiction

Abraham Lincoln, Man and Statesman, 1909; The Heir of Slaves, 1910; Frederick Douglas and the Spirit of Freedom, 1912; Fifty Years of Emancipation, 1913; The Ultimate Effect of Segregation and Discrimination, 1915; The New Negro, 1916; The Negro in the Light of the Great War (three editions), 1919; The Vengeance of the Gods, 1921; Bursting Bonds, 1923; American Aesop, 1926.

G(eorge) S(amuel) Schuyler, 1895-

Born in Providence, Rhode Island. He was educated in the public schools of Syracuse, New York, 1902 - 1912. He married Josephine Lewis of Fort Worth, Texas, in 1928; has one daughter.

Schuyler was a clerk in the United States Civil Service, 1919-1920; assistant editor of the Messenger, 1923 to 1928. He has been a member of the editorial staff of the Pittsburgh Courier since 1924. He was editor of the National News, 1932, special Liberia correspondent to the New York Evening Post, 1931. Since 1937 he has been business manager of the Crisis. He was a first lieutenant in the World War, has contributed to several contemporary magazines.

Bibliography

Novels

\*Black No More, 1931; Slaves Today, 1931.

Anne Spencer, 1882-

Born in Bramwell, West Virginia, she was educated at the Virginia Seminary, Lynchburg. Her poems have been published in several periodicals and anthologies.

Innocence

She tripped and fell against a star,  
A lady we all have known;  
Just what the villagers lusted for  
To claim her one of their own;  
Fallen but once the lower felt she,  
So turned her face and died,  
With never a bounding fool to see  
'Twas a star-lance in her side.

Wallace Thurman, 1902-

Born in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was graduated from the University of California. In 1926 he became managing editor of the Messenger, a Negro magazine published at New York. He worked as manuscript reader for the Macaulay Company for a time. Later he became a ghost writer for True Story magazine, ghosted books. He created two motion pictures of the "adult only" variety; has left the writer scene, after some frustrated attempts at real art.

## Bibliography

Novels

The Blacker the Berry, 1929; Infants of the Spring, 1932.

M. B. Tolson, 1900-

Born in Moberly, Missouri, the son of a Methodist minister. He attended about a dozen schools in Iowa and Missouri. He was graduated from Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, and Columbia University. He also attended Fisk.

In college Tolson edited the student paper and debated. He won several prizes in English and speech. His poem, "Dark Symphony", won the National Poetry Contest sponsored by the Negro American Exposition in Chicago in 1940.

Tolson writes the column "Caviar and Cabbage" for the Washington Tribune. His writings have appeared in Current History, Modern Quarterly, Art Quarterly, Trend, and several anthologies

of poetry. At present he is head of the dramatics and public speaking department at Wiley College, Marshall, Texas. His debate team held the first inter-racial debate in the south.

Tolson writes, "I'm working on a novel, Troubled in Mind, which received the Omega Award in Creative Literature, as a work in progress."

### Jean Toomer, 1894-

Born in Washington, D. C. He was educated at the University of Wisconsin, 1914-15, and the College of the City of New York, 1917-1918. He married Margery Latimer in 1931.

Toomer taught for a while and made his first impression as a writer in the more experimental magazines. He began writing in 1922 - fiction, verse, and literary criticisms which have appeared in several of the current periodicals. He has been a lecturer since 1925 on philosophy, life, and literature. His lyric poetry has received laudatory comment.

#### Song of the Son

Four, O pour that parting soul in song,  
O pour it in the sawdust glow of night,  
Into the velvet pine-smoke air tonight,  
And let the valley carry it along,  
And let the valley carry it along.

O land and soil, red soil and sweet-gum tree,  
So scant of grass, so profligate of pines,  
Now just before an epoch's sun declines,  
Thy son, in time, I have returned to thee,  
Thy son, in time, I have returned to thee.

In time, for though the sun is setting on  
 A song-lit race of slaves, it has not set;  
 Though late, O soil, it is not too late yet  
 To catch thy plaintive soul, leaving, soon gone,  
 Leaving, to catch thy plaintive soul soon gone.

O Negro slaves, dark purple ripened plums,  
 Squeezed, and bursting in the pine-wood air,  
 Passing before they stripped the old tree bare  
 One plum was saved for me, one seed becomes

An everlasting song, a singing tree,  
 Caroling softly souls of slavery,  
 What they were, and what they are to me,  
 Caroling softly souls of slavery.

#### Bibliography

#### Miscellany

\*Cane, 1923; Essentials, 1951; Portage Potential, 1932.

#### Waters E(dwards) Turpin, 1910-

Born in the tidal lowlands of eastern Maryland. He attended school in rural Maryland and urban New Jersey. Working summers - bell-hopping, dish washing, hash slinging - he earned his college tuition.

Then, there was graduation, graduate school, and the depression. Turpin worked on the New York WPA, all the while burning with an urge to write. His first teaching assignment was in West Virginia. He married, published his first volume. Then he went to Chicago to collect material and atmosphere for his second one.

Turpin is a resident of Baltimore, Maryland.

## Bibliography

Novels

These Low Grounds, 1937; \*O Canaan!, 1939.

Eric Walrond, 1898-

Born in British Guinea. He was educated at Colon, the College of the City of New York, and Columbia University.

## Bibliography

Short Stories

Tropic Death, 1926.

Walter White, 1893-

Born in Atlanta, Georgia. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Atlanta University in 1916. He married Leah Gladys Powell of Ithaca, New York, in 1922; two children.

He was assistant secretary of the NAACP from 1918 to 1929; acting secretary, 1929-1930; has been secretary since 1931. He was a delegate to the Second Pan-African Congress in 1921. He was appointed by President Roosevelt as a member of the Advisory Council for Government of the Virgin Islands; resigned in 1935.

White was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship for creative writing in 1927 and wrote in France, 1927-28. He received the Spingarn Medal for services to the Negro in 1937.

## Bibliography

Novels

Fire in the Flint, 1925; Flight, 1926.

Nonfiction

Rope and Faggot, 1929.

Richard Wright, 1909-

Born near Natchez, Mississippi. At the age of five he lived in a tenement in Memphis, Tennessee, where his father deserted the family. A problem child, Wright travelled with his people to Helena, Arkansas; then to Jackson, Mississippi, where his mother was stricken with paralysis during the World War. Next he was sent to Greenwood, Mississippi, to an uncle, being too much of a trial to his grandmother.

A Seventh Day Adventist church school failed to solve the disciplinary problem as far as Richard Wright was concerned. Finally it was impressed upon him how he made his poor mother - maimed for life - grieve. So he substituted superiority in the classroom for sheer deviltry. At 15, Wright left home and went to work in Memphis, where he absorbed discipline after two years.

From Memphis he travelled to Chicago, and sent for his mother and brother. He did miscellaneous jobs and read H. L. Mencken's Preface of Life between times. Came the depression and Wright was introduced to the labor movement. He joined the John Reed Club in 1934. He wrote some doggerel and then attempted prose.



Wright's Uncle Tom's Children won the Guggenheim Fellowship for 1939. He was chosen as one of the twelve distinguished Negroes of 1939 in a poll conducted by the Schomburg Collection. His Native Son was chosen as a Book of the Month Club selection.

### Bibliography

#### Novels

\*Uncle Tom's Children, 1938; \*Native Son, 1940.

#### Carter G(odwin) Woodson, 1875-

Born in New Canton, Virginia. He was graduated from the Douglas High School, Huntington, West Virginia, 1896. He studied at Berea (Kentucky) College, two years; University of Chicago, three years; Harvard University, one year; La Sorbonne, Paris, one year. Dr. Woodson received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1907 from the University of Chicago, his Master of Arts degree in 1908; his doctorate four years later at Harvard University. Dr. Woodson received a honorary degree from Virginia State College in 1939.

He taught in the high schools, Washington, D. C. from 1909 to 1918; principal of Armstrong Manual Training High School, 1918-19. He served as dean of the School of Liberal Arts, Howard University, 1919-20; dean of West Virginia Collegiate Institute, 1920-22.

Dr. Woodson is president and chairman of the board of Associated Publishers, Inc., which he founded in 1916. He is founder (1916) and editor of the Journal of Negro History, a

Quarterly; founder (1937) and editor of the Negro History Bulletin. He is a member of the American History Association.

#### Bibliography

##### Nonfiction

The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861, 1915; A Century of Migration, 1918; History of the Negro Church, 1921; The Negro in Our History, 1922; Negro Orators and Their Orations, 1925; Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830, 1925; Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830, 1925; The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters During the Crisis, 1925; African Myths, 1928; Negro Makers of History, 1928; The Rural Negro, 1930; The Negro Professional Man and Community, 1934; The Story of the Negro Retold, 1935; The African Background Outlined, 1936; African Heroes and Heroines, 1939. Joint author: The Negro Wage Earner, d.n.k.; The Negro Business Man, d.n.k.